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PRESS RELEASE

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Modern Art

A TRADITION TRANSFORMED: JAPANESE PRINTS 1947-1987
February 9 - April 24, 1988

The variety of printmaking styles and techniques explored by Japanese artists over the past four decades is examined in **A Tradition Transformed: Japanese Prints 1947-1987**. The exhibition, featuring fifty prints by nearly forty artists, will be on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from February 9 through April 24, 1988.

Among the world's earliest printmakers, Japanese artists developed a unique woodcut tradition over nine centuries. Since 1900 Japanese artists have gradually assimilated Western printmaking methods and ideas, radically changing Japan's graphic imagery; however, the native Japanese spirit and culture remained constant factors in the work of these artists. The Japanese Creative Print Society was founded in 1918 by experimental artists working in diverse styles and linked only by their commitment to participate in all aspects of print production, rejecting their country's long-established tradition of collaboration among designer, block cutter, printer, and publisher. This society dominated Japan's modern print movement--which grew markedly after World War II--well into the 1960s when younger artists became increasingly eclectic. Kihei Sasajima's A Mountain Stream shows the earlier generation's conservative innovation in woodcut; stencil prints by Yoshitoshi Mori and Sadao Watanabe represent the Folk Art movement popular in the 1930s.

2- japanese prints

Shiko Munakata, whose work reflects not only this Folk Art movement but also many other older Japanese traditions, became one of the most individual and well-known graphic artists of the twentieth century.

Some modern Japanese artists studied abroad and embraced a range of printmaking techniques in addition to the woodcut, such as mezzotints by Yozo Hamaguchi (Paris Rooftops is included in the show) and Keiko Minimi's etchings. Others joined international trends toward pure abstraction, including Masanari Murai, who captures personality with blocks and wedges of black or bright colors in the woodcut Three Faces and the silkscreen Round Face. Haku Maki is one of several artists who base their abstract images on Oriental calligraphy. Artists who perceive interesting parallels in everyday objects--asparagus, rope, and rooftops, for example--include Katsunori Hamanishi, whose dark mezzotints suggest Japan's constant tension between old and new, East and West.

A Tradition Transformed was organized by Starr Siegele, assistant curator, and Anne S. Babcock, curatorial assistant, of the Museum's Prints and Drawings department.

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For more information, photographs, or slides, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.